

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As Congress continues to work on its version of the Economic Stimulus package, Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) asked Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to be sure a fair share of the economic recovery package is slated for the 50 million Americans who live in rural communities.

Some economists have indicated that infrastructure spending in a recovery bill should be spent mostly in urban and suburban communities because they believe that would provide the greatest public benefit.

Wilson believes that spending on rural projects is also vitally important.

“100-percent of the district I represent is designated as Appalachia, and most of it is very rural.” Wilson said. “The hard working families of rural Ohio deserve equal consideration as the stimulus package is developed. I reject the idea that spending a portion of the stimulus package on rural America is inefficient spending.”

Wilson's letter to Speaker Pelosi follows.

January 13, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As you continue to draft an economic stimulus package, it is critical that the benefits of any stimulus include rural America. Approximately 50 million Americans live in rural communities. The economic stimulus package must recognize that rural Americans make vital contributions to our economy and face the same obstacles with rising unemployment as people living in urban and suburban communities. In fact, unemployment rates for non-metropolitan areas were higher each quarter in 2008 than for metropolitan areas. I urge you to support provisions in an economic stimulus package to ensure that rural communities receive their fair share of federal funds.

I strongly support your continued efforts to include infrastructure spending in the recovery package. However, legislation with infrastructure spending that ultimately only funds projects in urban and suburban communities will fail to provide the broad economic benefit the American people need. As a representative from a rural district, I know that rural communities are prepared with ready-to-go infrastructure projects that could put people to work within months. Rural communities have the workforce and the infrastructure needs to effectively utilize new federal spending, and should be provided with an equitable share of economic stimulus funds to improve their local economies.

The Job Creation and Unemployment Relief Act of 2008, H.R. 7110, included a provision to distribute stimulus funds between rural and metropolitan communities. Funds in the Federal Transit Administration Transit Capital Assistance Grants were specifically reserved for rural formula grants. Congress should build on the precedent created by the transit funds in the Job Creation and Unemployment Relief Act with guarantees in new economic recovery legislation to ensure an equitable distribution of all infrastructure funds between rural and metropolitan areas.

I look forward to working with you to improve our nation's economy and strengthen rural America in the 111th Congress. Thank you for your continued leadership during this severe economic downturn.

Sincerely,

Charlie Wilson
Member of Congress